

Message Text

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ACTION OES-06

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1791

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: OCLR, TGEN, IN

SUBJ: GOI CLEARANCE OF US RESEARCH VESSELS IN INDIAN WATERS

REF: NEW DELHI 2665

1. SUMMARY: IN DISCUSSIONS WITH DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DOST), AND MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (MEA), NSF REPRESENTATIVE POINTED OUT THAT NSF MIGHT NOT APPROVE PROJECTS THAT REQUIRED RESEARCH IN INDIAN WATERS BY RESEARCH VESSELS (R/V) UNLESS ASSURANCE COULD BE GIVEN THAT GOI CLEARANCE WAS LIKELY. DOST SUGGESTED A LONGER LEAD TIME, 6 TO 8 MONTHS, MORE DETAILED PROPOSALS, AND THAT DOST MIGHT BE THE BEST INTERFACE WITH GOI TECHNICAL MINISTRIES AS WELL AS THE MEA. END SUMMARY.

2. THE SCICOUNS AND MR LOUIS BROWN, INTERNATIONAL LIAISON OFFICER, DIVISION OF OCEAN SCIENCES, NSF, MET WITH DR R.D. DESHPANDE, DIRECTOR INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION, DOST, TO DISCUSS GOI CLEARANCE OF RESEARCH VESSELS (R/V) IN INDIAN WATERS. BROWN INDICATED THAT WITHOUT SOME ASSURANCE OF GOI CLEARANCE OF RESEARCH VESSELS, NSF WOULD FIND IT DIFFICULT TO SUPPORT SUCH PROJECTS. IN THE FUTURE IF GOI CLEARANCE COULD NOT BE ANTICIPATED, US INVESTIGATORS INTERESTED IN RESEARCH

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IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION WOULD BE LIKELY TO FOCUS ON PROBLEMS THAT DO NOT REQUIRE OBSERVATION IN INDIAN WATERS.

3. BROWN EMPHASIZED THAT BOTH US AND GOI WERE INTERESTED IN PROJECTS COMING UP, SUCH AS MONEX, GEOSELS, ETC. SCICOUNS POINTED OUT TO DESHPANDE THAT NO RESEARCH VESSEL HAD RECEIVED GOI CLEARANCE IN RECENT YEARS AND

THAT NSF WOULD BE TAKING A PROPER VIEW IN NOT SUPPORTING PROJECTS WHOSE MAIN PURPOSE IS TO GATHER DATA IN INDIAN WATERS. DESHPANDE COUNTERED THAT THE FIRST STEP, I.E. TO GET THE FIRST VESSEL CLEARED, WOULD BE DIFFICULT, BUT ONCE THAT WAS DONE FUTURE CLEARANCES FOR R/V'S WOULD BE EASIER. HE FELT THAT THE EMBASSY AND US AGENCIES WERE FOLLOWING THE WRONG TACK IN THEIR APPROACH TO THE GOI FOR CLEARANCE. HE SUGGESTED THAT BEFORE US PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS HAD GONE TOO FAR IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROPOSALS, IT WOULD HELP FOR THEM TO HAVE SOME DISCUSSIONS WITH INDIAN AGENCIES.

4. DESHPANDE SAID THAT JUST SENDING A DIPLOMATIC NOTE TO THE MEA WAS NOT THE MOST EFFECTIVE ROUTE FOR CLEARANCE. HE SAID THAT CONTACT WITH PROPER INDIAN AGENCIES AND DISCUSSIONS REGARDNG THE PROPSAL, WHICH WOULD INFORM THE INDIAN AGENCIES AS TO WHAT THE RESEARCH PROGRAM WAS, COULD BE FRUITFUL. HE SUGGESTED THAT GOI COULD RESPOND MOST EFFECTIVELY TO CLEARANCE REQUESTS TOO IF THE PROPOSALS WERE SUBMITTED TO GOI, FORMALLY OR INFORMALLY, THROUGH THE SCICOUNS, DR ANANDAKRISHNAN, AT THE INDIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON. HE SAID THIS SHOULD BE DONE WITH A 6 TO 8 MONTH LEAD TIME. BROWN INDICATED THAT THIS WAS POSSIBLE. THE INDIAN SCICOUNS REPORTS TO THE DOST AND DOST COULD BE AN EFFECTIVE ADVOCATE OF PROPOSED RESEARCH WITH THE GOI IN GETTING THE PROJECT CLEARED. DESHPANDE SAID THE DOST, WHICH DOES HAVE CRUISE SHIPS OF ITS OWN, COULD BE THE MOST EFFECTIVE AGENCY FOR DEALING WITH THE GOI FOR CLEARANCE. HE SAID THAT IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ORDER FOR HIM TO EFFECTIVELY RESPOND TO A CLEARANCE REQUEST, HE WOULD NEED TO RECEIVE A PROPOSAL WHICH WOULD INCLUDE THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH, THE CRUISE TRACK OF THE SHIP, THE APPROXIMATE DATES, THE NAMES OF THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS, AND THEIR BIO DATA. HE SAID THE GOI WOULD LIKE TO HAVE SEVERAL INDIAN SCIENTISTS AS MEMBERS OF THE SCIENTIFIC PARTY DURING THE PORTION OF THE CRUISE IN INDIAN WATERS. THE GOI WOULD ALSO LIKE TO HAVE COPIES OF THE RAW DATA COLLECTED DURING THAT PART OF THE CRUISE DONE IN INDIAN WATERS. HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT INDIA DOES NOT HAVE A LOT OF RESEARCHERS IN OCEANOGRAPHY WHO MIGHT BE AVAILABLE TO PARTICIPATE ON A US RESEARCH CRUISE, AND THAT IT IS OFTEN NECESSARY FOR THEM TO PLAN THEIR SCHEDULES WELL IN ADVANCE. HE INDICATED THAT THE ABSENCE OF INDIAN SCIENTISTS ON A US R/V MIGHT CAUSE A PROBLEM IN OBTAINING GOI CLEARANCE, BUT FELT THAT WE SHOULD PURSUE GETTING CLEARANCE FOR PROJECTS IN ANY EVENT. SCICOUNS SUGGESTED THAT RESEARCH IN INDIAN WATERS SHOULD BE INCLUDED AS A HIGH PRIORITY

AREA FOR COLLABORATION UNDER THE INDO-US SUBCOMMISSION
ON S&T. DESHPANDE CONCURRED THAT THIS MIGHT BE INCLUDED
ON THE AGENDA FOR THE NEXT SUBCOMMISSION MEETING.

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5. DESHPANDE SAID THE MOST IMPORTANT EFFECT OF DEALING
DIRECTLY WITH DOST THROUGH GOI SCICOUNS IN US, INSTEAD OF
RELYING ON DIPLOMATIC NOTE TO MEA, IS THAT DOST WOULD
PROVIDE THE FOLLOW-UP AND GET THE CLEARANCES OF THE
CONCERNED GOI MINISTRIES. (FYI: PRESENTLY THE EMBASSY
SENDS A DIPLOMATIC NOTE TO THE MEA. THIS NOTE BRIEFLY
SUMMARIZES THE PURPOSE OF THE CRUISE AND THE AMERICAN
SCIENTISTS INVOLVED ON THE BASIS OF INFO PROVIDED BY
DEPARTMENT. THE MEA CIRCULATES THE EMBASSY DIPLOMATIC
NOTE TO WHAT IT BELIEVES ARE THE CONCERNED GOI TECHNICAL
MINISTRIES. THESE MINISTRIES RECEIVE A COPY OF THE
NOTE AND THEN MUST PASS JUDGMENT ON WHETHER THE WORK
OUGHT TO BE DONE IN INDIAN WATERS. WE HAVE NEVER BEEN
ABLE TO ISOLATE THE SOURCE OF OBJECTION TO THE US-PRO-
POSED RESEARCH. END FYI.)

6. IN THE CASE OF THE ATLANTIS II, DESHPANDE SAID HE
HAD RECOMMENDED TO MEA WHEN QUERIED THAT THE RESEARCH
BE PERMITTED, BUT THERE WAS NO FOLLOW-UP BY THE COUNCIL
ON SCIENTIFIC/ INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH (CSIR) WHICH IN THIS
CASE WAS SUPPOSEDLY THE LEAD AGENCY. IN FACT, ALTHOUGH
THE EMBASSY SENT A BLIND COPY OF THE DIPLOMATIC NOTE
ON THE ATLANTIS II TO CSIR, THE CSIR DID NOT FOLLOW IT
UP NOR DID THEY RECEIVE A COPY FROM MEA UNTIL SEVERAL
WEEKS BEFORE THE CRUISE SHIP WAS TO ARRIVE IN INDIA.

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THE SCIENCE OFFICE CALLED CSIR AS WELL AS MEA A NUMBER OF TIMES TO ASK THE STATUS OF THE ATLANTIS II CLEARANCES.

7. BROWN ALSO CALLED ON MEA JOINT SECRETARY (AMERICAN) MADHAVAN. MADHAVAN, NEWLY ARRIVED IN MEA, WAS NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE PROBLEM, BUT DID SUGGEST THAT IN FUTURE REQUESTS, THE VALUE TO INDIA OF A PARTICULAR R/V CRUISE SHOULD BE STRESSED. HE INDICATED HE WOULD MAKE FURTHER INQUIRIES ON THE MATTER AND BE IN TOUCH WITH US.

8. COMMENT: US R/V CRUISE PROPOSALS FOR RESEARCH, ACCORDING TO BROWN, ARE SUBMITTED TO FUNDING US AGENCIES (E.G. NSF AND ONR) WITH LONG LEAD TIMES. PROPOSALS FOR RESEARCH IN INDIAN WATERS COULD BE AVAILABLE TO THE GOI AT LEAST SIX MONTHS PRIOR TO THE PLANNED CRUISE. WE SUGGEST IN THE FUTURE THAT BOTH INFORMAL AND FORMAL PROPOSALS BE DISCUSSED WITH ANANDAKRISHNAN IN WASHINGTON AS FAR IN ADVANCE AS POSSIBLE. THAT STEP WILL PROVIDE THE DOST WITH MAXIMUM ADVANCE NOTICE OF OUR INTENTIONS, AND MAY CAUSE IT TO FEEL IT CAN MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROPOSED PROGRAM, IN WHICH THE DOST THEN HAS A VESTED INTEREST. SCICOUNS HERE WILL CURRENTLY KEEP HIS DOST CONTACT INFORMED. AS SOON AS NSF APPROVES A PROJECT, THE EMBASSY SHOULD BE INSTRUCTED TO SEEK FORMAL CLEARANCE, WHICH WE WOULD DO THROUGH NORMAL CHANNELS, BUT ALSO KEEPING DOST AND OTHER INTERESTED GOI SCIENTIFIC AGENCIES INFORMED.

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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